Exodus and The Ipuwer Papyrus[1]

The Ipuwer Papyrus is an ancient Egyptian document that presents an **extra-biblical evidence of the ten plagues in Egypt.** Here are some details related to the "Ipuwer papyrus":

In the early 19th Century a papyrus, dating from the end of the Middle Kingdom, was found in Egypt. It was taken to the Leiden Museum in Holland and interpreted by A.H. Gardiner in 1909. The complete papyrus can be found in the book *Admonitions of an Egyptian from a heiratic papyrus in Leiden.*

The papyrus describes violent upheavals in Egypt, starvation, drought, escape of slaves (with the wealth of the Egyptians), and death throughout the land. The papyrus was written by an Egyptian named Ipuwer and appears to be an eyewitness account of the effects of the Exodus plagues from the perspective of an average Egyptian. Below are excerpts from the papyrus together with their parallels in the Bible for the plagues and the Exodus.

The Plagues

Below are key portions of the papyrus (italicized), compared with parallel biblical scriptures about the plagues that ravaged Egypt. Dispersed all throughout Ipuwer's text, the especially relevant examples have been grouped together below, beginning with a particularly startling parallel.

Indeed, the river is blood, yet men drink of it. Men shrink from human beings and thirst after water …. (Exodus 7:20, 18: "[A]nd all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. … [T]he Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water ….")

Indeed, [hearts] are violent, pestilence is throughout the land, blood is everywhere, death is not lacking …. (Exodus 9:15: "[T]hat I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence …." Exodus 7:19: "[T]hat there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt ….")

Indeed, all animals, their hearts weep; cattle moan because of the state of the land …. (Exodus 9:3, 6: "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain. … [A]nd all the cattle of Egypt died.")

Behold, the fire has gone up on high, and its burning goes forth against the enemies of the land …. Indeed, gates, columns and walls are burnt up …. (Exodus 9:23-24: "[A]nd the

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[1] Original textual analysis from the book *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage from a Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden* (Gardiner, Alan H. (1969) from his 1909 research. This book can be found at archive.org at: https://dn790005.ca.archive.org/0/items/admonitionsofegy00gard/admonitionsofegy00gard.pdf).
Textual summaries of this book were copied from the *Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archeology* and other sources.

fire ran along upon the ground …. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous ….")

Indeed, everywhere barley has perished …. (Exodus 9:31: "And the flax and the barley was smitten ….")

The land is without light …. (Exodus 10:22: "[A]nd there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.")

Indeed, men are few, and he who places his brother in the ground is everywhere …. (Exodus 12:30: "[T]here was not a house where there was not one dead.")

Indeed, every dead person is as a well-born man …. Indeed, the children of princes are dashed against walls …. (Exodus 12:29: "[A]t midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon ….")

Indeed, laughter is perished and is [no longer] made; it is groaning that is throughout the land …. (Exodus 12:30: "[L]oud wailing was heard throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died"; New Living Translation.)

All is ruin! … Indeed, that has perished which yesterday was seen …. Ipuwer laments the utter—and sudden—destruction of the land.

As the Bible describes, for the initial plagues, the Egyptian magicians attempted to replicate the miracles. This they did to varying degrees of success, before they recognized their power as completely useless. As with the Bible, Ipuwer also mentioned the downfall of magicians. Indeed, magic spells are divulged; smw- and shnw-spells are frustrated because they are remembered by men.

The division of Upper and Lower Egypt

Ipuwer made another interesting note: Indeed, the ship of [the southerners] has broken up; towns are destroyed and Upper Egypt has become an empty waste. The Bible states that the Israelites occupied the Land of Goshen. This was a major area within Lower Egypt, in the Nile Delta region. Egypt, during the first half of the second millennium BC, was divided into two areas: Upper Egypt in the south, ruled by native Egyptians, and Lower Egypt in the north, inhabited and governed by "foreigners" originally from Canaan. At the end of this period, Upper Egypt gained power and overthrew Lower Egypt. It is interesting that Ipuwer here made specific mention of the utter destruction of Upper Egypt. God stated that the land within which the Israelites dwelled—Goshen, within Lower Egypt—would be spared. For example: "And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there …. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail" (Exodus 8:22; 9:26).

The Spoiling

After the final, 10th plague of Egypt (the death of the firstborn), the Egyptians became desperately urgent for the Israelites to leave. They offered up all kinds of personal belongings and treasures to them, in what the Bible describes as the "spoiling" of the Egyptians.

Here, the Ipuwer–Exodus parallels continue:

Indeed, poor men have become owners of wealth, and he who could not make sandals for himself is now a possessor of riches …. (Exodus 12:35-36: "And the children of Israel … borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment …. And they spoiled the Egyptians.")

Indeed, gold and lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise, carnelian and amethyst, Ibhet-stone and […] are strung on the necks of maidservants …. (Exodus 11:2: "[E]very woman (borrowed) of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.")

IPUWER PAPYRUS – LEIDEN 344	TORAH – EXODUS
2:5-6 Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere. 2:10 The river is blood. 2:10 Men shrink from tasting – human beings, and thirst after water 3:10-13 That is our water! That is our happiness! What shall we do in respect thereof? All is ruin.	7:20 …all the waters of the river were turned to blood. 7:21 …there was blood thoughout all the land of Egypt …and the river stank. 7:24 And all the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.
:10 Forsooth, gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire. 10:3-6 Lower Egypt weeps… The entire palace is without its revenues. To it belong [by right] wheat and barley, geese and fish 6:3 Forsooth, grain has perished on every side. 5:12 Forsooth, that has perished which was yesterday seen. The land is left over to its weariness like the cutting of flax.	9:23-24 …and the fire ran along the ground… there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous. 9:25 …and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field. 9:31-32 …and the flax and the barley was smitten; for the barley was in season, and flax was ripe. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten; for they were not grown up. 10:15 …there remained no green things in the trees, or in the herbs of the fields, through all the land of Egypt.

5:5 All animals, their hearts weep. Cattle moan… 9:2-3 Behold, cattle are left to stray, and there is none to gather them together.	9:3 …the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field… and there shall be a very grievous sickness. 9:19 …gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field… 9:21 And he that did not fear the word of the Lord left his servants and cattle in the field.
9:11 The land is without light	10:22 And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt.
4:3 (5:6) Forsooth, the children of princes are dashed against the walls. 6:12 Forsooth, the children of princes are cast out in the streets. 6:3 The prison is ruined. 2:13 He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere. 3:14 It is groaning throughout the land, mingled with lamentations	12:29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive that was in the prison. 12:30 …there was not a house where there was not one dead. 12:30 …there was a great cry in Egypt.
7:1 Behold, the fire has mounted up on high. Its burning goes forth against the enemies of the land.	13:21 … by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.
3:2 Gold and lapis lazuli, silver and malachite, carnelian and bronze… are fastened on the neck of female slaves.	12:35-36 …and they requested from the Egyptians, silver and gold articles and clothing. And God made the Egyptians favour them and they granted their request. [The Israelites] thus drained Egypt of its wealth.